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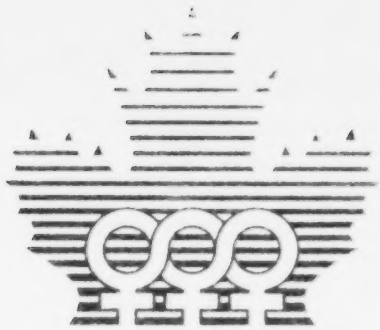

Canadian
Advisory Council
on the Status of Women

Conseil
consultatif canadien
sur la situation de la femme

PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN CANADA:

NOTES FOR A PRESENTATION BEFORE THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE SECRETARY OF STATE

February 10, 1987
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Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women

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Prior to answering your questions, I would like to give Committee members an overview of the work of the CACSW and some of the priorities that the Council will be focussing on in the next few years. We will then sketch briefly the progress that women have made since 1900 in achieving equality in the legal, economic, and social spheres. Finally, we have selected three areas of the country — the Vancouver region, southwestern Ontario, and rural Quebec — for an in-depth examination of the realities of women's lives today.

GROWTH OF THE CACSW

The CACSW was formed in 1973, in response to recommendations contained in the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. It urged the creation of a new agency to continue the work of the Commission and to "create a favourable climate for equality of opportunity for the women of Canada". The Commission also recommended that the Council report annually to Parliament on the progress being made in improving the status of women in Canada. Today we report to Parliament through the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Hon. Barbara McDougall.

The Council occupies a unique position among organizations working for the enhancement of the status of women in Canada. The CACSW advises the federal government and reaches its constituency of the women of Canada through the activities of its President, vice-presidents, and members and through its active research and publications/public affairs programs.

The Council consists of up to 30 members appointed by the Prime Minister. The President and two vice-presidents (one in the West and one in the East) work full-time for the Council. Together, the full-and part-time members attend regular meetings, establish Council positions, and advise on and approve Council activities and recommendations. The members are chosen to reflect the linguistic, ethnic, social, and economic diversity of Canadians and for their active participation in improving the status of women in their areas.

The central office in Ottawa is supported by a staff of 39 people, organized into three divisions — research, communications, and administration. [At the time of reprinting, Council staff numbers 41, and is organized into four sections: research, publications, public affairs, and administration.] The Council maintains an effective regional presence through the offices of the vice-presidents in Calgary and Montreal and a small field office in Winnipeg. These offices maintain an active liaison with groups in their regions, oversee regional distribution of Council publications, monitor issues in the regions, and provide reference facilities for concerned individuals and organizations.

A Leader in Public Policy

Since 1973, the CACSW has been at the forefront in addressing the major legal, economic, and social issues affecting the lives of women. Charter and constitutional guarantees of equality, employment equity, pensions, child care, health, education, social benefits, marriage, divorce, child-bearing, and child-rearing all have come under our scrutiny.

Over the years, the CACSW has identified issues of concern to women, and has been able to affect the course of public policy. Three examples of this include our work in the area of aboriginal women, immigrant women, and wife battering.

Some of the Council's earliest recommendations were in support of the actions of aboriginal women related to the discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act. In 1978, the Council published *Indian Women and the Law: Citizens Minus*, the first and only significant work that documented the history of injustice against aboriginal women.

The federal government responded to Council recommendations, interventions from Ministers and other parliamentarians, media campaigns, and public pressure and introduced Bill C-31. This bill, which became law in 1985, removes discriminatory sections from the Indian Act on the basis of gender. The Council is currently reviewing the situation of aboriginal women in Canada since the

law was enacted. [*Bill C-31: Equality or Disparity? The Effects of the New Indian Act on Native Women* was published in March 1987.]

In 1978, another Council publication, entitled *Problems of Immigrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force*, documented the working conditions for many immigrant women in Canada and the widespread exploitation of domestic workers. The attention given to this work and the Council recommendations in this area led in 1981 to a change in immigration policy to prevent such discrimination. [*Immigrant Women in Canada: Current Issues* was published in September 1986.]

One of the most startling studies to be released by the Council was the 1980 publication of *Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle*. It was the first national study of this problem, and its statistic that one in 10 Canadian women were victims of battering shocked both parliamentarians and the public.

The attention given to the Council's recommendations on this issue led to a number of concrete actions, including: the formation of a Parliamentary Task Force on Family Violence, creation of the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence within the department of National Health and Welfare, and the publication of a Health and Welfare pamphlet on wife battering that was mailed to three and a half million Canadian women. As an aside, I would also like to inform the Committee of the Council's upcoming national study on battered women and the effects of battering on children and families. [*Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada* was published in June 1987.]

In addition to publications, Council recommendations are often communicated to Parliament through submissions to standing or legislative committees, special commissions, task forces, and through meetings with Ministers from various departments. Resource materials and publications are received with enthusiasm by women's groups, educational institutions, interested individuals, and the media.

The Council's budget is $2.6 million for this year or approximately 18 cents for each Canadian woman. [At the time of reprinting, the Council's budget is $3.1 million.] At its December 1986 meeting, the Council approved a detailed workplan of the legal, social, and economic issues that it will focus on in the next three years. These issues include:

- options for compensating paid and unpaid labour;
- women as entrepreneurs;
- women's life patterns in the family;
- the causes and consequences of women in poverty;
- the legal, social, and economic status of aboriginal women;
- the Charter and constitutional guarantees of equality;
- the participation of women in power structures and decision-making; and
- the special needs of immigrant, disabled, elderly, rural, and adolescent women.

A public version of this plan will be released this spring on International Women's Day. [*Fine Balances: Equal Status of Women in Canada in the 1990s* was published in March 1987.]

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY

Part of the Council's work is to monitor changes in the lives of women in Canadian society. By focussing public and government attention on these changes, we believe policies and programs can be developed that respond more directly to the needs and conditions of women's lives.

Before examining the status of women today in Canadian society, it is important to look briefly at the changes that have taken place since the early 1900s. At that time, women's lives were characterized by a stable family relationship centred around children and domestic production. In general, women's work in the home was not valued.

As the century progressed, more and more women entered the labour force and, gradually, women's contribution to the paid labour force gained recognition. A new definition of womanhood emerged, one which emphasized women's role as equals. Impediments to women's full participation in all spheres of society were recognized and steps taken to eliminate them.

The progress toward equality for women in Canada continues today. The Advisory Council and many other status-of-women groups strive to ensure that all legal, economic, and social programs and policies incorporate the principle of equality.

Legal And Political Progress Toward Equality

Nowhere has there been more significant changes than in the area of legal and political issues (see Appendix 1 for a chart of key dates). It was only 69 years ago — until 1918 — that one-half of the adult population was not allowed to vote. It was an historic day when, in 1921, Agnes Macphail became the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. Yet, despite this, it took eight more years before the British Privy Council overturned a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and deemed women to be "persons".

Since the 1920s, progress has been steady. Looking at the chart, a few key dates are evident: the right to run for office in provincial legislatures was given in 1916 in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and in 1940 in Quebec. In 1957, Ellen Fairclough was sworn in as the first female federal Cabinet Minister.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1967. Parliament, in 1977, passed the Canadian Human Rights Act, forbidding discrimination on the basis of gender and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value for women. In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which Canada ratified in 1981.

In the 1980s, the Council, together with many Canadians, applauded the inclusion of sex equality in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which came into force in 1985. We were equally pleased when the blatant discrimination against aboriginal women was removed by this government in 1986.

The progress toward legal equality has not been without setbacks. The Advisory Council was among many who protested a 1973 Supreme Court case which rejected the right of a farm wife, Irene Murdoch, to share in the property she and her husband had acquired. The case was instrumental in leading to the reform of various provincial family laws.

- **Women in Politics**

The Council also remains concerned about women's representation in decision-making at the parliamentary level. From the time Agnes Macphail entered the House of Commons in 1921 until 1984, a total of 38 women have been elected to sit in the House of Commons. Despite the dramatic gains made in 1984, the Council is concerned that, at the current rate of increase, it will take 842 years before equal numbers of women and men are elected to Parliament.

Today, only 9.9 per cent of Canadian parliamentarians are women; worldwide, few countries have achieved full equality in the political sphere. In Scandinavian countries, for example, women constitute 15 to 30 per cent of the membership of national parliaments.

Economic Progress Toward Equality

The number of women in the paid labour force has increased dramatically since the early 1900s. The increasing participation of women is a fact of today's life, with nearly 5.2 million women and 7.2 million men comprising Canada's paid work force (see Appendix 2).

In the early 1900s, about 16 per cent of women were employed outside the home. Often, these women spent 10 to 12 hours per day, six days a week, in noisy, poorly ventilated factories or shops. Many, if not most, of these women were single women and widows who could not count on having fathers, brothers, or sons to provide for them. In other cases, the husbands of many married women simply could not earn enough to cover expenses.

Women's contribution to the formal economy continued to grow in the ensuing decades. By 1970, 38 per cent of the women in Canada were working outside the home and that figure rose to 54 per cent by 1984 compared to men's 77 per cent participation rate.

■ **Employed Wife and Mother**

Since World War II, more and more married women, either with or without children, have been entering the paid labour force. For whatever reason — either through choice or the need to provide or supplement the family income — this trend is expected to continue. In 1983, for example, 49 per cent of women in the work force had children under the age of three, 56 per cent had children under five years old, and 62 per cent had children under the age of fifteen.

Women work in the home as full-time homemakers in about 16 per cent of Canadian families. At the beginning of the century, our studies have found that women worked an average of 55 hours a week in the home. Despite advances in technology, committee members may be surprised to learn that our recent data confirms that, in 1986, women at home still work an average of 55 hours a week.

The Council has been at the forefront in pressing for recognition of the value of women's work in the home. In 1983, we produced a booklet entitled *Homemaker Pension: For Work That Deserves Concrete Recognition*, which was instrumental in leading to the current federal-provincial negotiations on this issue.

It is also interesting to note that married women employed in the labour force work, on average, 35 hours a week in the home, in addition to the hours spent in the paid work force. Husbands of full-time homemakers work 10 hours in the home, while husbands of women in the paid labour force work 11 hours.

Although women are now acknowledged to be "full-fledged" members of the labour force, the situation of women in the labour market has not substantially improved. The following sections will demonstrate that the historic problems of a large wage gap and occupational segregation are still of grave concern today.

■ Women's Wages

There is no doubt that the standard of living for both women and men has improved considerably since the 1900s. Yet, it is also a fact that the wage gap has been fairly constant over the past 10 years. In 1970, for example, women who worked full-time, year-round, earned about 60 per cent of wages earned by men who worked on the same basis. By 1980, the percentage had risen to 64 — only a four per cent improvement.

Inequality does not end with wages. Because unemployment insurance benefits, pensions, sick leave, maternity leave, and other benefits are often tied to wages, women not only receive lower wages than men when they are working, they also get much less when they are old, sick, or unemployed.

The weekly benefit paid to women who qualify for maternity benefits under the unemployment insurance programs aptly illustrates the low earnings of women workers. In 1984, for instance, when the maximum weekly benefit was $255, women who claimed benefits received an average of $178.53 a week.

■ Women's Work

Women's lives in the paid labour force have always tended to be concentrated in a narrow set of occupations. In the early 1900s, most women worked as domestics, laundresses, unskilled factory workers, and teachers. These occupations soon became known as women's domains.

Over the next 40 years, women's job opportunities expanded as women were hired for secretarial, clerical, and sales positions. Today, it is true that the number of occupations available in our economy has greatly expanded; in fact, the 1981 Census data lists 500 occupations. However, a closer examination of the data reveals that about 60 per cent of women still remain concentrated in 20 occupations, which include secretarial, clerical, and sales.

Our finding is confirmed by the most recent Statistics Canada data on occupational trends. It reports that although women accounted for 70 per cent of total employment growth between 1976 and 1985, the proportion of all 25- to 34-year-old women who were in clerical occupations rose from 24 to 31 per cent, while the proportion of young women in service occupations remained constant at 21 per cent.

The fastest growing management positions are found in the occupations which have traditionally drawn women — teaching, medicine, health, and social sciences. The entry of women in social sciences, for example, was such that they now form a majority, with 55 per cent of the total compared to 45 per cent in 1976.

The Council believes that programs to alleviate the concentration of women in a narrow set of occupations should be designed so that traditional stereotypes are not reinforced. Our forthcoming publication on the Canadian Jobs Strategy notes, for example, that the majority of women in this program are receiving training in traditionally female and lower-paying occupations. In fact, the paper showed that in one community alone that figure could be as high as 90 per cent. [*The Canadian Jobs Strategy: Current Issues for Women* was published in February 1987.]

Social Progress Toward Equality

As we move into the area of social progress toward equality, we note that there have been few areas in which more change has occurred than within families. The notion that women's contribution to a family or a marriage was worth less than that of a man's was demonstrated by the lack of a pension or a smaller amount of pension paid to her. Now, traditional views have been replaced by the concept of marriage as an economic and social partnership of equals. There is no doubt that Irene Murdoch today would receive a better settlement than she did in 1973.

Yet, despite this dramatic shift, full social equality for women in families is far from ensured. All rights and responsibilities are not equally shared nor are the consequences of particular acts or events such as the birth of a child, a separation, a divorce. Any crimes committed by one family member against another are not prosecuted and punished in the same manner in which comparable crimes against strangers would be prosecuted.

Social inequality is especially evident after the breakdown of a relationship. In general, more women tend to become poor after a separation or divorce, while men tend to retain their previous economic status. Studies show that, after divorce, women's purchasing power is reduced 42 per cent, while men's increases by 70 per cent.

The Council notes with concern that the proportion of low-income families led by women has increased markedly over the past 25 years. In 1961, only 13 per cent of poor families were headed by women. Their share climbed to 17 per cent in 1969, and to an estimated 37 per cent in 1985.

True equality within families also will not occur until the ongoing problem of wife battering is resolved. Despite higher prosecution rates and funds for transition homes, the Council's forthcoming study will show that wife battering and its effects on both women and children continues to be a pressing problem.

■ The Educated Woman

No real progress toward social equality will be complete until the needs of women and education are recognized and accommodated. In the early 1900s, the educated woman was a figure of fun and called a "bluestocking". Knowledge and matters of the intellect were considered essentially masculine concerns and the woman who pursued an education was thought to have compromised her femininity.

Today, women's participation in education has changed. At one time, a high school diploma was all that was necessary to get a good job, and education beyond high school was largely a male preserve. At the beginning of the 1970s, only 38 per cent of undergraduate degrees were awarded to women; by 1980 this had jumped to 50 per cent (see Appendix 3). We have also been encouraged by the changing profile of the enrolment of women in universities: between 1976 and 1984, the proportion of women enrolled full-time in commerce and business management almost doubled, from 23 per cent to 42 per cent.

Beyond a bachelor's degree, however, an education is still a non-traditional experience for women. In 1980, for example, only 37 per cent of Master's degrees and only 23 per cent of doctoral degrees were obtained by women.

PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY ACROSS CANADA

From this brief historical examination of the progress women have made toward full equality, it is evident that much has been gained in all areas of society. It is equally clear that new and often more complex issues are emerging daily. Each must be assessed in terms of the effect it will have on achieving equality for women in all spheres of society.

In formulating policies, programs and laws, the Council believes it is also important that the particular needs of women in their communities be taken into account. For that reason, three areas of the country were selected to illustrate the realities of women's lives in Canada today. These are: the urban area of Vancouver, the mixed urban/rural communities of southwestern Ontario, and rural Quebec in the area around Montreal.

In each of these regions, the Council has examined the number of families in which both husband and wife work outside the home, the percentage of women between the ages of 16 and 64 employed in the paid labour force, the percentage of female lone-parent families, and the proportion of households whose family income falls below the poverty line.

Vancouver Urban Region

The map in Appendix 4 covers 13 ridings in the Vancouver area. Here, we can see that the labour force participation rates for all women is consistent with national averages. In Vancouver, the proportion of all women who are employed in the paid labour force averages 56 per cent and ranges from 52 to 68 per cent depending on the riding. Nearly the same proportion of married women, either with or without children, work outside the home.

The incidence of low-income families varies across ridings, ranging from 8 to 23 per cent. This map illustrates that nearly 10 per cent of all families in the Vancouver area have women who are the head of the family because they are either separated, divorced, widowed, or never married. Because, on a national basis, 60 per cent of such families live in poverty, Council researchers assume that many urban Vancouver women are in the same situation.

Southwestern Ontario Mixed Urban/Rural Region

Council researchers examined 13 ridings in southwestern Ontario, from Sarnia to Hamilton (Appendix 5). Here, the average labour force partici-

pation rate for all women is again high at 55 per cent, with some areas approaching 61 per cent and others around 52 per cent. Similarly, an average 47 per cent of families have both partners working outside the home, with a high of 52 per cent and a low of 42 per cent.

The incidence of low-income families is 10 per cent, with some urban centres as high as 17 per cent and others nine per cent. The proportion of female-headed families was eight per cent, but can range from six to 12 per cent, depending on the riding.

Quebec Rural Region

The Council chose 16 ridings in the area around Montreal to show a typical rural area comprising agricultural, resource-based, and recreational enterprises (Appendix 6). In this region, the percentage of all women, married or single, employed in the paid work force appears to be lower than in the other two regions. An average of 47 per cent of all women, including 41 per cent of working couples, work in the paid labour force.

The Council has noted that the seemingly low participation of women can be misleading as many women working in agriculture or family businesses may not be included in official statistics. These women, known as "femmes collaboratrices", share in the upkeep of a farm or the management of a business with their husbands or partners. Some are paid a salary by their husbands/ partners; others are not. Often, many of these women do not have legal status or safeguards.

In the rural region, the incidence of low-income families averages 13 per cent, slightly higher than the average urban level. However, a higher incidence of poverty is found in pockets in some cities and this finding is true for all areas across the country. The proportion of female-headed families is eight per cent, lower than in the West.

PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY IN THE FUTURE

The picture painted by these maps and by the national statistics is therefore clear. Women have made a great many gains in working toward their full equality in all spheres of life — legal, economic, and social.

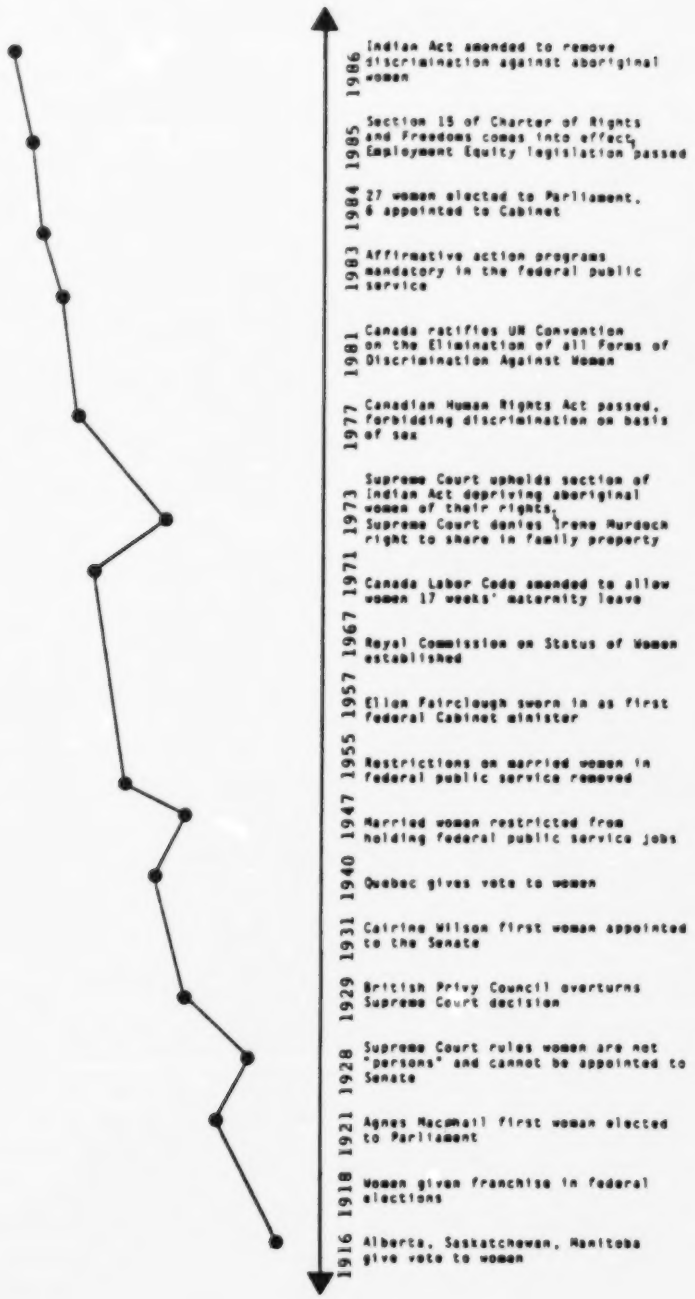
Women now have legal recognition for their contribution to the family and to the Canadian economy. Increasing numbers of women are in the paid labour force and, if the historical trend remains constant, will continue to contribute an average of 40 per cent of family income. Social equality for women in families has increased dramatically, and educational opportunities have greatly improved.

But balanced against this progress are the persistent problems. Despite 69 years of legal recognition, few women enter politics at the federal level. Although women participate in the paid labour force, low wages and benefits and occupational segregation still exist. Work in the home is neither fully recognized nor compensated. Real equality in the social sphere will remain an elusive goal until the issues of work and power relationships are resolved.

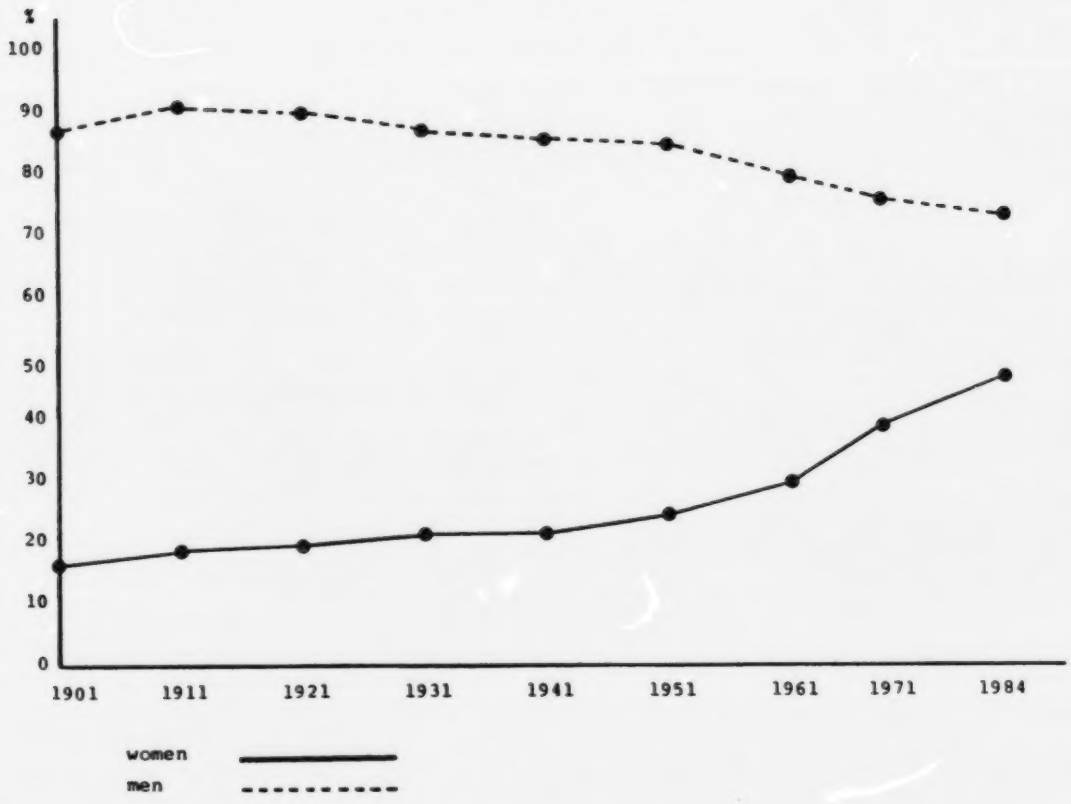
And as the regional maps clearly demonstrate, the most critical problem would appear to be the large proportion of low-income families in Canada, with a disproportionate number headed by women. For these women in particular, there is a pressing need for policies and programs that fit their requirements.

For our part, the Advisory Council will continue to monitor and assess the progress toward equality in Canadian society. The Council believes the challenge for status-of-women groups and parliamentarians will be ongoing research to identify issues that affect women's lives. By working together, Council members believe that common solutions, which recognize the needs of women and their families, can be found.

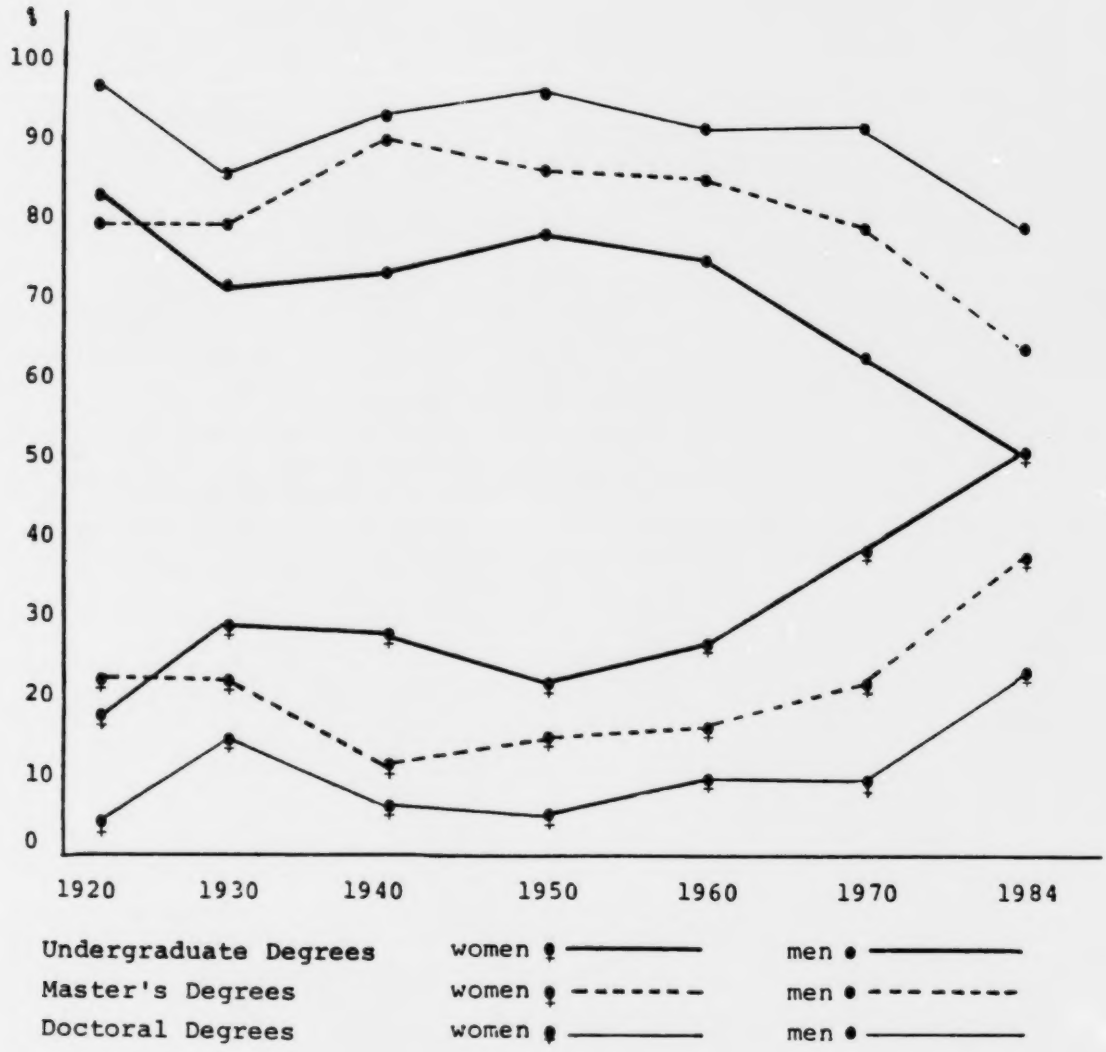
APPENDIX 1 LEGAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY: KEY DATES


1986
Indian Act amended to remove discrimination against aboriginal women
1985
Section 15 of Charter of Rights and Freedoms comes into effect; Employment Equity legislation passed
1984
27 women elected to Parliament, 6 appointed to Cabinet
1983
Affirmative action programs mandatory in the federal public service
1981
Canada ratifies UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
1977
Canadian Human Rights Act passed, forbidding discrimination on basis of sex
1973
Supreme Court upholds section of Indian Act depriving aboriginal women of their rights; Supreme Court denies Irene Murdock right to share in family property
1971
Canada Labor Code amended to allow women 17 weeks' maternity leave
1967
Royal Commission on Status of Women established
1957
Ellen Fairclough sworn in as first federal Cabinet minister
1955
Restrictions on married women in federal public service removed
1947
Married women restricted from holding federal public service jobs
1940
Quebec gives vote to women
1931
Cairine Wilson first woman appointed to the Senate
1929
British Privy Council overturns Supreme Court decision
1928
Supreme Court rules women are not "persons" and cannot be appointed to Senate
1921
Agnes Macphail first woman elected to Parliament
1918
Women given franchise in federal elections
1916
Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba give vote to women

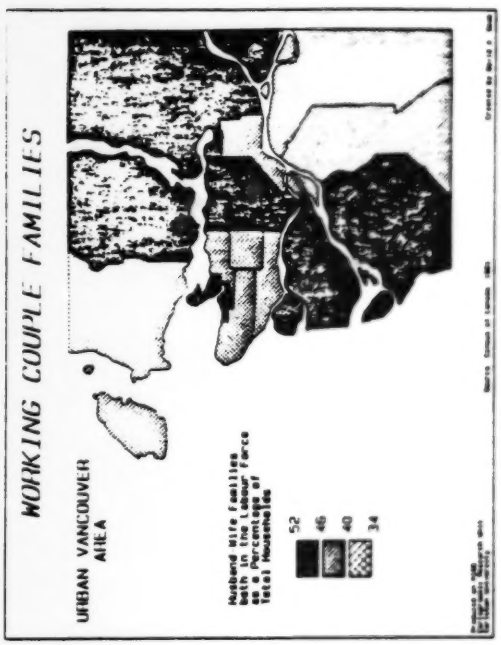
APPENDIX 2 ECONOMIC PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

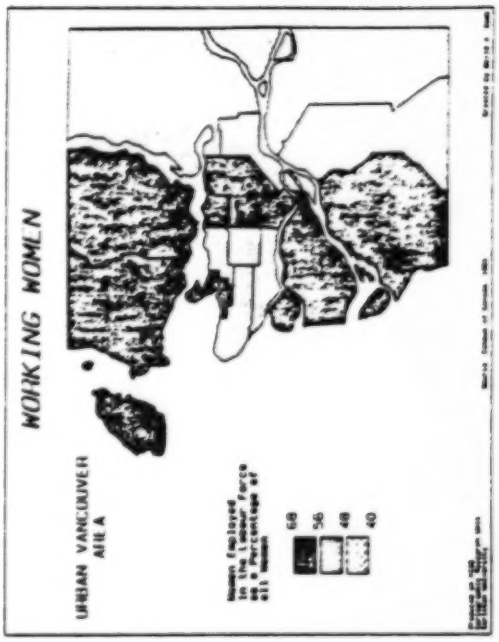


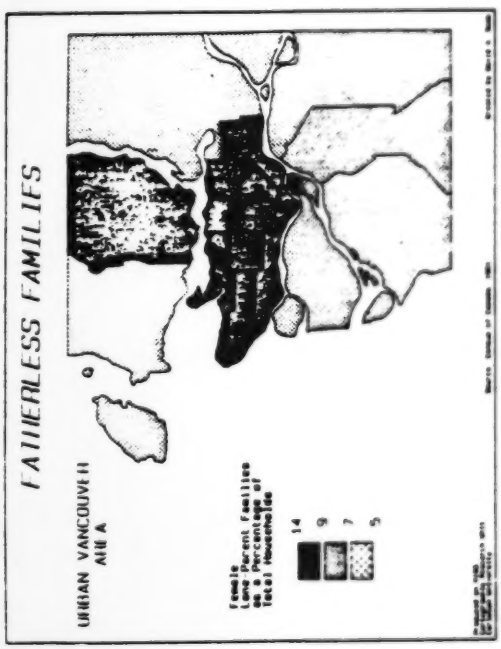
APPENDIX 3 SOCIAL PROGRESS TOWARD EQUALITY: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL DEGREES OBTAINED BY WOMEN AND MEN

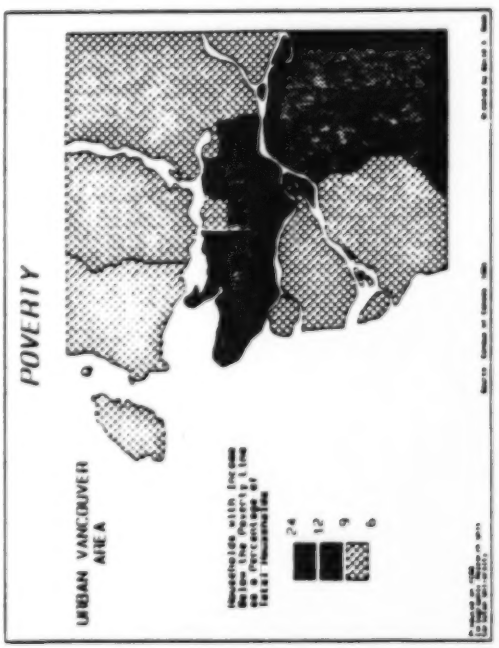


APPENDIX 4 MAP OF RIDINGS IN URBAN VANCOUVER

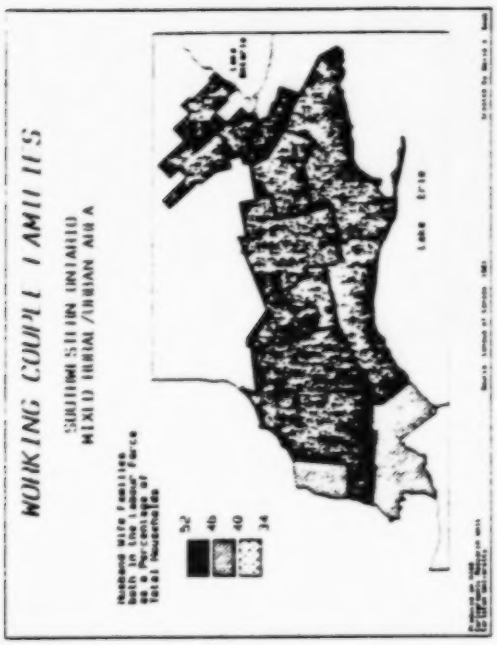


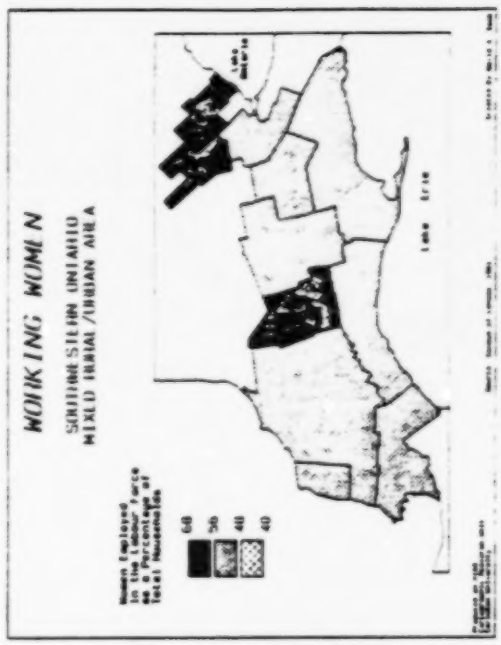


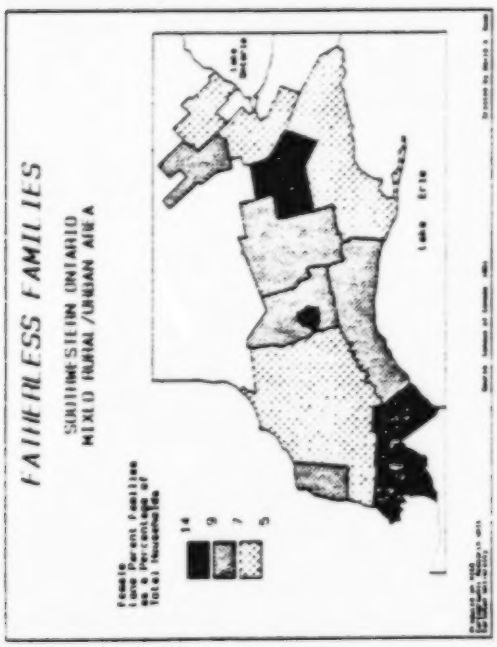


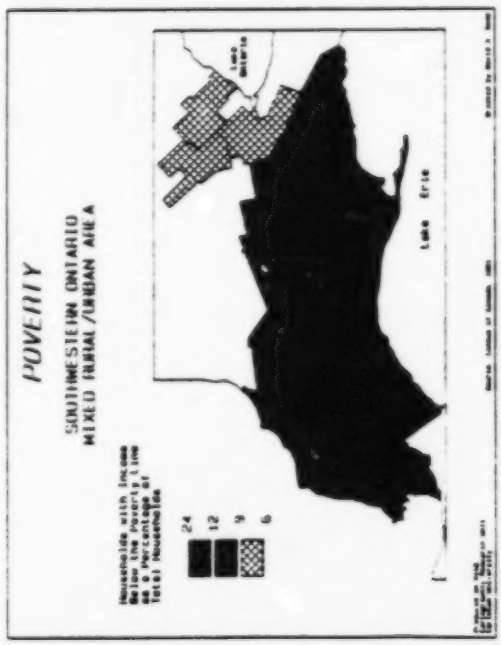


APPENDIX 5 MAP OF RIDINGS IN MIXED URBAN/RURAL AREA OF SOUTH-WESTERN ONTARIO









APPENDIX 6 MAP OF RIDINGS IN RURAL QUEBEC